

reflected in a slight mitigation of the rigid and deeply resented passport regime in Alsace-Lorraine.

• In the milder atmosphere inaugurated by the visit of Jules Simon, the organizers of a picture exhibition in Berlin to be held in May 1891, invited French artists to take part. The French Ambassador replied that his Government, though unable to participate officially in a private enterprise, would view with pleasure an acceptance of the invitation by French artists. This guarded reply was perhaps as much as Berlin expected, and invitations were now sent to individual artists in France. At a dinner at the French Embassy the Kaiser loudly expressed his admiration for French art, and eulogized with fervour the talent of Meissonier, who had recently passed away. Not content with verbal eulogies, he gave instructions for a letter in similar terms to be written to the French Ambassador, with the request to forward it to the Académie des Beaux-Arts. The French Government in return awarded to Helmholtz the medal of Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour, adding that this was the first time since the war that such a high distinction had been conferred on a German. The *detente*, however, was purely superficial. "Tout le temps qui s'écoulera avant la lutte suprême sert à notre préparation," wrote Herbette to his chief in February 1891.

At this moment the French Ambassador was informed that the Empress Frederick was about to visit Paris incognito. The French Government was not consulted before the decision was reached. Her object, it was explained, was to make purchases for her new home at Kronberg, but she also desired to meet French artists and to induce them to exhibit at Berlin. In telegraphing the news Herbette added that the slightest *contretemps* might have disastrous results. The

visit aroused the
liveliest interest in both countries, for it was
widely though
falsely believed to cloak far-reaching political
designs. Leading
German papers described it as a historic event.
" Germany
has given a fine example of her desire for
reconciliation,"
wrote the *Vossische Zeitung*; " will France
respond ? May we
not hope that the chiefs of the French nation, in
view of the
noble intentions of the Emperor's mother, will
abandon the
ideas of revenge ? " Such utterances naturally
provoked the
Nationalists, who spoke of " our holy hatreds."
The ex-
Empress, who was never celebrated for tact,
added fuel to the
flame by visiting the park of St. Cloud and
lunching at Ver-
sailles. " My mother," remarked the Kaiser, " is
not easy to